

**Testimony of Debbie Davis  
Residential Program Worker  
Oak Hill**

**Before the Appropriations Committee  
Friday, February 20, 2009**

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Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Merrill and the other members of the committee.

My name is Deborah Davis. I am a member of District 1199, the health care workers union, and I work in a group home in Glastonbury for Oak Hill. Oak Hill is a private non-profit agency that provides services to people with developmental disabilities. I want to thank you for this opportunity to tell you a little about what I do and my struggles to support myself and care for my clients, who are people with Developmental Disabilities.

I have been doing this work for eighteen years. After all that time, I now make \$17.97 an hour. If I were working directly for the State in a DDS group home, I would be making more than \$24 an hour. We do the same work as our counterparts in DDS for the same client population, but for half the wages. At one time, direct care givers at private agencies were almost at parity with state workers but now we keep falling further and further behind.

This is just one example of how the state has shifted the burden of the cost of care to the private agencies, through underfunding. In turn, the agencies shift costs to the employees. The result is high turnover, massive burnout, people working multiple jobs and disruptions to the quality and continuity of care for our clients. Private agencies have been starved of the funding

they need to provide services by the State of Connecticut and those agencies are now starving us.

For this coming year, Governor Rell has completely left private provider agencies like Oak Hill out of her budget proposal. Unless the legislature funds our programs *and* ensures that all of that additional funding is dedicated to **wages** and **benefits** for direct caregivers, we will see our wages freeze and our insurance costs soar. My clients have 100% health insurance coverage, at no cost to them or their families. It's wonderful that in this state we're committed to providing that care. Why can't we be just as committed to supporting the people like me who are the ones doing the providing?

Thank you.